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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/538,014	06/07/2005	Toshiaki Kambe	0230-0226PUS1	8889
2292	7590	08/08/2008	EXAMINER	
BIRCH STEWART KOLASCH & BIRCH PO BOX 747 FALLS CHURCH, VA 22040-0747				MARX, IRENE
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
		1651		
NOTIFICATION DATE			DELIVERY MODE	
08/08/2008			ELECTRONIC	

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

mailroom@bskb.com

<i>Office Action Summary</i>	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/538,014	KAMBE ET AL.
Examiner	Art Unit	
Irene Marx	1651	

-- *The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address* --
Period for Reply:

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 March 2008 and 26 March 2008.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-10 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) 4-8 is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-3,9 and 10 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____ .

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____ .

5) Notice of Informal Patent Application

6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

The amendment filed 3/17/08 is acknowledged. Claims 1-3 and 9-10 are being considered on the merits.

Claims 4-8 are withdrawn from consideration as directed to a non-elected invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claim 10 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 10 is confusing in that it is unclear whether the mutant as claimed is or is not able to degrade polyurethane bonds.

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

- (a) the invention was known or used by others in this country, or patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country, before the invention thereof by the applicant for a patent.
- (b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

- (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 1-2 and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Ohshiro *et al.* taken with ATCC Catalogue.

The claims are drawn to a *Rhodococcus* strain or a mutant thereof which has the ability to degrade urethane bonds.

The cited references each discloses a *Mycobacterium* strain (F-96) and various *Arthrobacter*, *Brevibacterium* and *Nocardia*, respectively, at least one of which appears to be identical to the presently claimed *Rhodococcus* strain or a mutant thereof, since they have the ability to degrade urethane bonds. (see, e.g., col. 2 and Table 1, respectively). It is noted that many strains of *Mycobacterium*, *Arthrobacter*, *Brevibacterium* and *Nocardia* have been reclassified as *Rhodococcus* and, if they are not the same genus, they are very closely related thereto as evidenced by pervasive reclassification to *Rhodococcus* from the recited genera, as adequately demonstrated by ATCC Catalogue (pages 1-4).

The referenced microorganism appears to be identical to the presently claimed strain and is considered to anticipate the claimed microorganism since it is disclosed as being of the same class as that of the microorganism claimed and similarly has the ability to degrade urethane bonds. Consequently, the claimed strain appears to be anticipated by the reference.

In the alternative, even if the claimed microorganism is not identical to the referenced microorganism with regard to some unidentified characteristics, the differences between that which is disclosed and that which is claimed are considered to be so slight that the referenced microorganism is likely to inherently possess the same characteristics of the claimed microorganism particularly in view of the similar characteristics which they have been shown to share. Thus the claimed strain would have been obvious to those skilled in the art within the meaning of USC 103.

Accordingly, the claimed invention as a whole was at least *prima facie* obvious, if not anticipated by the reference, especially in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments have been fully considered but they are not deemed to be persuasive.

Applicant argues the specific properties of the one strain obtained. However, the claims are directed broadly to any *Rhodococcus* or *R. equi*. There is nothing on the record to substantiate the contention that none of the strains disclosed by the reference can be reclassified as *Rhodococcus*. Applicant has not provided data regarding *Nocardia globerula* or *B. fuscum*, for example. Therefore, this argument fails to persuade.

Regarding the obviousness rejection, even if the strains were not to be classified in the same genus, it is clear that the strains of the reference and the claimed strains are very closely related and cannot be readily distinguished, as evidenced by pervasive reclassification. The reference adequately demonstrates that the related strains have similar enzymatic abilities for the degradation of urethane bonds, and applicant has not demonstrated otherwise for any and all *Rhodococcus* or even any *R. equi*.

In addition, applicant relies on Matsumara *et al.* (Exhibit J) for disclosure relating to polyurethane bonds and relates these teachings to a lack o0066 expectation of success for their degradation. This is the only extent to which this reference is considered.

In this regard, Applicant argues that the urethane bonds of interest are the urethane bonds in polyurethane and that the reference strains would not be reasonably expected to degrade them. Yet this is not the invention as claimed, except for claim 9. It must be noted that applicant has not demonstrated in the application as-filed that any strain other than the specific strain *Rhodococcus equi* strain TB-60-DMZ 16175 is capable of degrading the urethane bonds of polyurethane. Therefore, the arguments presented are only relevant to the specific strain claimed, which is not under rejection.

The scope of the showing must be commensurate with the scope of claims to consider evidence probative of unexpected results, for example. *In re Dill*, 202 USPQ 805 (CCPA, 1979), *In re Lindner* 173 USPQ 356 (CCPA 1972), *In re Hyson*, 172 USPQ 399 (CCPA 1972), *In re Boesch*, 205 USPQ 215, (CCPA 1980), *In re Grasselli*, 218 USPQ 769 (Fed. Cir. 1983), *In re Clemens*, 206 USPQ 289 (CCPA 1980). It should be clear that the probative value of the data is not commensurate in scope with the degree of protection sought by the claim.

Therefore the rejection is deemed proper and it is adhered to.

Claims 3 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Irene Marx whose telephone number is (571) 272-0919. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (6:30-3:00).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Michael G. Wityshyn can be reached on 571-272-0926. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/Irene Marx/
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1651